

Seasonal Needle Drop

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. When many people hear the word evergreen tree they tend to assume that the needles stay on the tree forever. In reality, while most evergreens don't lose their needles every fall, they do go through periods of natural needle drop when 3 or 4 year old needles are shed. This often happens early in the fall but this year we are just now noticing it. Needles lost from natural needle drop are further back on the branches, the needles turn yellow and they fall off. If this is what you are seeing on your pine trees, there's nothing to worry about. In fact those needles can be gathered up and used as mulch around other plants. They make very good mulch. Now, if the needles of your pine or other evergreen are turning brown clear out to the ends of the branches and the brown needles don't fall off, that's a problem. Call me! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Winterizing Roses I

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Not all roses are created equal. Most shrub and miniature roses are pretty darn winter hardy in our region. The noticeable exception to this is hybrid tea roses and even within that category there are differences. While I have some that survive with no winterizing, I know that I could lose them any winter. To ensure survival of hybrid tea roses you need to protect the bottom 8 to 10 inches of soil with mulch or compost. You want to start by cutting back any excessive long canes to about 30 to 36 inches and possibly tie them together so they don't whip around in winter winds. Wait until we've had some cold weather and the ground has cooled down to do this. Some years this may be December before that happens but this year we've been blessed with early cold. Tomorrow, the rest of the process. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Winterizing Roses II

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Once we've had cold weather we can start mulching down our roses. We mulch as much to keep them cold and to prevent them from breaking dormancy too early as we do to protect them from the cold. Bring in soil or compost from outside the rose bed area to mound up 8 to 10 inches tall over the base of each plant. You don't want to scrape it up from right around the plants as rose roots are shallow and this could cause injury to the rose roots and thereby the roses. Once that ground has started to freeze up periodically add about a four inch layer of stay leaves or hay with more soil on top of that to hold the mulch in place. Doing this too early can invite mice to spend the winter munching on the base of your roses. Before new growth starts next spring remove the straw and mulch moving the soil off site. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

High pH Soils

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Many people worry about acidic soils for their landscape and garden plants, especially if they previously lived east of the Mississippi River. While we do have some acidic soils, we have far more soils that are high pH or alkaline. Alkaline soils can have as many if not more issues than acid soils and are far harder to rectify. In fact most of our garden and landscape plants do far better in slightly acid soils than in alkaline soils. We add lime to acid soils and can raise the pH in just a year or two very effectively. High pH soils require the addition of sulfur and then a lot of time. Finely ground or powdered sulfur can be hard to find but works much faster than the flaky soil sulfur we often find available. If you know from your soil test you need sulfur you can still add it and till it in this fall, but please, soil test first! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Start Amaryllis Now for Christmas

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Amaryllis is a tender bulb plant with a large flower that is ready to bloom when you buy it. Amaryllis bulbs are large, sometimes as large as a grapefruit. The larger the bulb the larger the flowers and the larger the price. Amaryllis are increasingly popular as a holiday flowering plant, but to have one flowering by Christmas you need to get it going now. Place the bulb in a pot just an inch or two bigger than the bulb. Hold the bulb so about half of it will remain exposed and the roots hang down into the pot and add potting mix. When the mix is half way up the bulb stop, water it down and place in a warm sunny location. The flower stalk may show up very soon or it may sit there for a while. When the flower bud starts to show color, move it to a less sunny and cooler location so the flower lasts longer. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.